

DRAFT Minutes: Meeting of the Ft Ward Park and Museum Advisory Group

April 9, 2014

TC Williams HS

Present: Chair-Chuck Ziegler, Rich Brune, Frances Terrell, Adrienne Washington, James Walpole, Susan Gitlin, Bob Moir, Sharon Annear, Janice Magnuson

City Staff: Susan Cumbey, Frances Bromberg, Audrey Davis, Lance Mallamo, Laura Durham

Public: Shirley Downs, Carlos Johnson; Ft Ward and Seminary AA Descendants: Gerald Wanzer, Arminta Wood, Calvin Terrell, Sr., Anthony Adams, Sr., Jason Wood, Brenda Adams, Sharon Colbert, Frederick Colbert, Dr. Michael Casey, Carol Johnson

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Charles Zigler at 7:05pm once a quorum had been reached.

Appointment of Secretary: Frances Terrell was appointed as secretary for this meeting.

Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the November 11 meeting were approved by unanimous voice vote. The minutes of the January 29 meeting were passed with an amendment to the last paragraph regarding a statement on the number of grave locations identified in the Old Grave Yard. There were 17 grave locations identified in the Old Grave Yard.

The Chair acknowledged the guests in attendance and asked if they had comments or had anything they wished to say to the members of the committee.

Carol Johnson, representing the Ft Ward and Seminary African American Descendants Society, whose family has been in the community since the Civil War, raised concerns on the activity and plans for Ft Ward park along with the archeological history. Her concerns addressed finding the graves as descendants indicate more are there, the stormwater runoff in the area of the existing graves, the historical accounting of the Ft Ward African American community and recognition of them, and ensuring that the hallowed ground is not disturbed. Of the five categories of the management plan, she questioned what and how priorities would be identified. She said she understands the history and stormwater pieces are not part of the management plan, but emphasized that we would like to see the entire report that makes up the overall Ft Ward management plan before it is submitted to whoever the governing body might be, City Council or whomever.

The Chair recognized Adrienne and agreed with her recommendation that the entirety of Carol Johnson's remarks be distributed to the committee. The remarks will also be placed on the website. In response to her concerns, Chuck noted that the draft Ft Ward Drainage Master Plan is to have a public viewing on May 7, Laura concurred. He also said that according to the Memorandum of Understanding, before any digging or ground disturbance was to be done at the Park, Office of Historic Alexandria has to get a 72 hour notice. Also various areas of the park have been given priorities or caution in terms of digging.

At this point, the Chair recognized Fran Bromberg who gave a detailed account of the Archaeological Investigations Report she had recently produced, placed on the website, and distributed copies of to the committee. She confirmed that archeological testing of the entire park has now been done. She said she was not saying all the graves have been identified; however, they feel they have located the places where we know graves are present (the sacred areas—Old Grave Yard, Jackson Cemetery, Adams Burial Area and Clark Burial Area) as well as areas that have a possibility for graves to be present (north and west of Oakland Cemetery, northern part of maintenance yard, along Braddock Road, and just north of the

fortification). These areas have been set aside as maximum protection areas. Nothing in terms of development can happen in those areas, and there is certainly an opportunity to look for additional graves in those locations. In the event that plans call for minimal ground disturbance that could have an impact on graves in these maximum protection areas (such as placement of a marker or other interpretive or commemorative feature), then archaeology will excavate before the placement to ensure that no burials will be disturbed; the locations for these features will be changed if a grave is discovered. She also said there are locations which they call high protection areas. The high protection zones are primarily in the areas where previous residences were located. In these high protection zones, nothing should go on unless archeology is consulted so that archaeological monitoring and/or excavation, if needed, can be conducted prior to any ground disturbance. Fran said that one of the highest priorities in looking for additional grave locations is in the northern part of the former maintenance yard where 4 grave locations were identified during the archaeological work completed to date. There could be additional grave locations in this area, and she stipulated that there should be additional work to look for more graves. This is particularly true along the line between Oakland's cemetery and the northern part of the old maintenance yard in that that is where some part of the stormwater management is planned to prevent water runoff into the Oakland cemetery. That is a location where we would want to look for more graves, sooner rather than later, as the city funded in 2012 for archeological purposes associated with making sure graves weren't disturbed during the grading process. There is about \$30,000 left in that fund to look for additional graves associated with the implementation of the drainage plan that is now being proposed.

A guest question was raised about what technology was used in identifying the grave locations. Fran explained the process of ground penetrating radar (GPR). Adrienne noted that she and others in the and these areas have been set aside as sacred, maximum protection areas. Nothing in terms of development can happen in those areas, and there is certainly an opportunity to look for additional graves in those locations. She said 4 grave locations have been identified; there could be additional grave locations identified, and stipulated that there should be additional work to look for more graves. She also said there are several locations which they call protection sites, and in the protection zone nothing should go on unless archeology is consulted. Particularly along the line between Oakland's cemetery and the northern part of the old maintenance yard in that that is where some part of the stormwater management is planned to prevent water runoff into the Oakland cemetery. That is a location where we would want to look for more graves, sooner rather than later, as the city funded in 2012 for archeological purposes associated with making sure graves weren't disturbed during the grading process. There is \$30,000 left in that fund to look for additional graves associated with the implementation of the drainage plan that is now being proposed.

A guest question was raised about what technology was used in identifying the grave locations. Fran explained the process of ground penetrating radar (GPR). Adrienne noted that she and others in the community had not had an opportunity to review the stormwater report and would need more time for comments prior to the May 7 meeting and she would like stronger language included in the management report to ensure that ground disturbance did not occur where potential graves are located. Chuck suggested she look at the Memorandum of Understanding on the city's site and emphasized the 72 hour notice to Office of Historic Alexandria for any ground disturbance. She said a comment had been made that it's a matter of trust, but our trust has been broken repeatedly so we want to make sure that the language is indeed strong enough to hold in case something happens.

Chuck thanked her and opened the discussion to addressing the Lardner-Klein's 5 priority goals defined in the management report. Each member had been asked to submit their 3 top priority goals under the

five goals listed in the Lardner-Klein report for the next five years. He said he had received most of the responses over the last 24 hours and totaled up the ones that received the most emphasis and agreement.

Under goal 1: management and funding to link the financial needs of the park to other city initiatives - (1) broaden the ask ; (2) make the existing paved loop pedestrian path system accessible where possible and sign areas where it is not possible.

Goal 2: Park Character – protect, preserve, repair and maintain resources – (1) Protection of the grave sites, mark and protect unrecognized civil war archeology, the fort community and burial sites; (2) map areas in conjunction with Office of Historic Alexandria where ground disturbance can be supervised, unsupervised or not at all; (3) redirect stormwater away and sheet flow away from sensitive cultural and recreational resources through small berms. He commented, if we delay, this stuff is never going to get done and these erosions will continue, and finally, (4) remove former maintenance yard access drive fencing, gate and structures from eastern edge of the park and reshape the fill at the site.

Goal 3 – landscape and cultural practices – Plant new trees annually. Comment: I know trees haven't been planted in the last 5 years because they are waiting for the management plan, and certainly; (2) remove fallen and hazardous trees. Biggest winner of all; (3) train all personnel who do park maintenance on the use of equipment.

Goal 5 - Enhance park facilities – make pedestrian use the priority use for the paved loop path.

Chuck commented that these were the ones that really stood out from among the recommendations received, and indicated that these are some of the things to be emphasized in the management plan and in our report to the Council. Jim Walpole highlighted goal 4 which Chuck hadn't gotten much feedback on.

Goal 4 – Educate and engage visitors, share the stories of Ft Ward park. Jim felt the most fundamental need for Ft Ward renovations is building a new visitor center and museum like every other historical park. Without a visitors center incorporating the military aspects, the initial African American inhabitants, the community development, Ft Ward is encountered by visitors on a piecemeal basis. He suggested that expenses incurred might be funded outside of the City by a celebrity figure, grants or non-profits. Sharon commented that one of the issues that is and will affect any expansions and development at this time will be due to budgetary constraints, sequestration, unemployment and other factors. Fran Terrell indicated that this is all the more reason to broaden the ask by contacting the National Park Service, the Defenses of Washington, the African American History Museum to have our Ft Ward and African American history presented on a local, national, and regional level.

Chuck commented that this would fall under broaden the ask. And while he is with you in supporting the expansion of the museum, he is looking at what can practically be realized in the next two years.

The Chair recognized Lance Mallamo who commented briefly on the history report indicating that they had met with the descendants in March, were taking those comments in, evaluating them and making changes. They will have another meeting and would like to have a presentation to this group in June. He, too, said that budgetary constraints have a major bearing on what can be done in the way of upgrades over the next few years. There are some funds available. \$500,000 funding is available for stormwater drainage which will be a priority regardless of the others because the funding is already there.

Chuck says he will be sending the priorities received from the advisory group to Laura to be distributed and placed on line.

Next Steps: The Advisory Committee will host the stormwater public meeting on the 7th at Minnie Howard at 7:00pm
Advisory Committee meeting on May 14, 7:00pm, Minnie Howard Library

The Chair stated that our mandate ends in September and questioned when the management report would go before the Council. Laura said that due to the delay in getting public comments on the stormwater management plan, they would probably update the Council in June and the final document for approval to the Council in September. Comments of our group to consultants will be incorporated into a revised semifinal version.

Chuck thanked the guests for coming and their participation, and thanked Laura, Fran and Lance for their support. A motion was made to adjourn at 8:32pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Frances Terrell, Secretary

Encl Attendance Sheet